



# HELPPFILE

## Neighbours sharing DSL connection

**Q** My neighbour and I would like to be able to use broadband but individually cannot justify the costs. Our houses are approximately 40 metres apart (out of reliable range for wireless), but we have a workshop and garage that could power a wireless repeater.

What equipment would we need to use a single broadband connection? Would a computer have to remain powered at all times? Could we retain our existing email accounts and keep them separate and private? We would not require, or wish, to see each other's computers or data. Does a wireless router need to be connected to a live PC to enable a notebook to connect to the internet?

*Clive Wills, cwills@bournemouth-net.co.uk*

**A** Once you have a broadband connection, a router enables you to share it among several computers using either Ethernet cables or wireless connections. The ISP providing the broadband service may have rules about who you are allowed to share it with. Wireless is easier to install, as you don't need to run cable, but it can be less reliable.

Outdoors, where there are no walls for the signal to go through or bounce off, it usually has a much better range than indoors, so reasonable connections over clear sight distances of up to 90 metres should be possible. However, outdoor signals are easily blocked by the leaves on trees or bushes. WiFi uses radio signals in the microwave band and, just as in a microwave oven, the water in the leaves absorbs the signal. You can experiment with wireless connections or even install Ethernet cable between the two houses. If you use Ethernet, it is best to lay it through plastic pipe underground as sometimes lightning can strike an overhead cable and zap all the computers on the network. For longer-range wireless connections, use special directional wireless antennas.

The router does not need to be near a computer except in initial setup, during which you need to connect it directly to a computer using an Ethernet cable to change the settings. If you have a notebook

computer, you could use that to do the initial setup, after which it is possible to disconnect it and use the wireless network to access the internet. Since routers occasionally lock up and need to be reset, it would be convenient for a shared router to be located somewhere accessible to both households. Many routers incorporate a digital subscriber line (DSL) modem, so you'll want to locate the router somewhere near a telephone connection. If you are using a cable service, you must install it near the modem that will be connected to the cable connection.

### EMAIL ISSUES

Some ISPs restrict access to their mail servers so only users of the service can connect and collect mail. If you don't use the ISP's services, you will be able to use separate, private email accounts. Although it is possible to collect incoming mail from another email server, outgoing mail still has to be sent through the simple mail transfer protocol (SMTP) server belonging to your ISP, or else to a secure SMTP server that checks for a username and password.

To avoid problems with your sent emails appearing to other email services as if they are spam, it is best to send mail through a secure server belonging to your email provider. Many services allow you to set up your own domain name and get an email service for a modest fee.

### FILE SHARING

While your two computers will be connected via a local area network, files on your computers would not be visible to each other, or other users on the network, unless you choose to share them. For greater security, use a software firewall program on each PC.

For maximum security you can create your own private network. Buy another router (without a modem) and connect its wide-area network (WAN) port to the shared router. This requires an Ethernet connection to the shared router. By doing this, you use the firewall in the second router to keep file-sharing network traffic local to your household.

## CONTACTS

### PLEASE EMAIL THE RELEVANT DEPARTMENT

helpfile@computershopper.co.uk  
for all PC problems

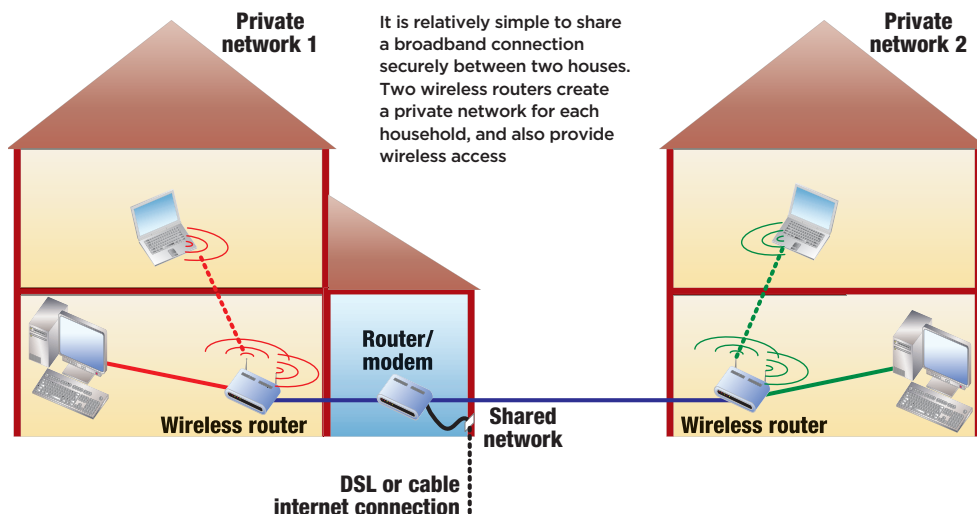
softwarehelp@computershopper.co.uk  
for help with software applications

buyinghelp@computershopper.co.uk  
for advice on PC purchases

businesshelp@computershopper.co.uk  
for IT solutions to business goals

### YOU CAN ALSO WRITE TO US AT:

Help  
Computer Shopper  
30 Cleveland Street  
London  
W1T 4JD



# Problem with FireWire connector

**Q** Recently I connected my camcorder to my PC using a FireWire cable. Unfortunately, I pushed the FireWire cable into the PC the wrong way around. This should not happen with a shaped plug, but it is easy to do. As a result, I seem to have blown the iLink board on my camcorder, which is in for an expensive repair. Surely it should not be possible to insert a plug wrongly like this? I have found no warnings about it.

Alex Bennett, alex@bennett1962.fsnet.co.uk

**A** You aren't the only person to have done this. Unfortunately, FireWire can live up to its name. Apple notebooks have been known to start smoking when a FireWire cable is plugged in upside down. The six-pin FireWire plug is asymmetric, with the top end square and the bottom end U-shaped with angled corners, so you wouldn't think it would fit the wrong way round. However, far too many FireWire cables are made of cheap materials with a thin metal shroud on the plug that can be bent easily with relatively little force, and which often comes loose.

On many cheap FireWire cables the metal shield has its joint at the U-shaped end, and pushing a plug in upside down can force this end apart. After that, it is unable to prevent the plug being inserted upside down. FireWire's power connector is between 20 and 30 volts (typically around 25 volts), enough to cause serious damage to electronic circuits designed to run at much lower voltages.

You don't even have to insert the plug fully to do damage. Even if the pointed end stops when it hits the square end, you can push it in at an angle, upside down, far enough for a data line to short against the power connector. A fraction of a second is enough to fry the sensitive circuits in your video camera or other device. This is true even though the small FireWire connector used by video cameras does not include a power pin. The problem occurs if the data lines touch the power connector at the computer end.

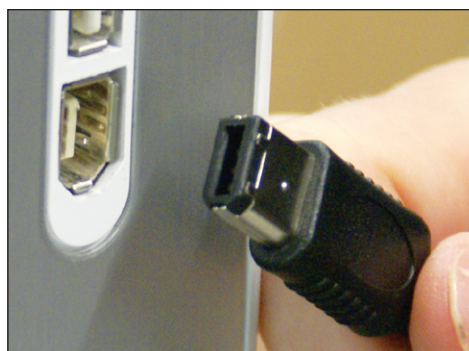
When trying to plug a cable into a socket at the back of the computer, it is easy to insert it partially at an angle or upside down. We would advise users always to plug a FireWire cable into the computer before plugging it into the camera. To be safer still, turn off the computer before plugging in any FireWire cable. Although the specifications say FireWire devices are hot-swappable, I've seen enough external FireWire

hard disks brought to me for data recovery after being hot-swapped to know it is never a good idea.

On some earlier Macs with FireWire, plugging in a hard disk that is powered off can also cause damage to the computer's FireWire circuitry if you then turn on the computer before the external hard disk. It seems the computer tries to power up the drive through the FireWire cable, and a current surge can damage the circuitry. Newer Macs (with the FireWire 800 ports) have additional surge protection for this reason. The power pin is an optional part of the FireWire specification and, since it is an awkward voltage that does not match any of the ATX specification power supply outputs, many Windows-based computers don't include it. This removes the danger, but means that these computers may not be able to use bus-powered FireWire devices.

Apple engineers seem to have recognised this, and the newer FireWire 800 standard (IEEE specification 1394b) uses a different style of nine-pin plug that does not have this problem. You can also buy a six-pin male-to-six-pin female FireWire Isolator cable, though they are hard to find. This is just a male-to-female extension cable with no power wire. You can keep it plugged into the FireWire port on the back of your computer and simply plug devices such as a video camera into the female end of the cable. It won't work with any devices that need FireWire power, though.

You can also fry equipment with a FireWire cable that is kinked or damaged and shorted internally. So if your FireWire cable is starting to look twisted, throw it away before it gets bad enough to damage something.



▲ It's all too easy to connect a FireWire cable wrongly and it can be a costly mistake

# Kaspersky warns of riskware

**Q** Kaspersky Anti-Virus has reported that the cover disc with *Shopper* February 2007 contains riskware, naming it as "not-a-virus:client-IRC.Win32.mIRC.62". Is this a problem and, if so, what is the remedy?

John Wright, wrightash@hotmail.com

**A** Kaspersky is being overly cautious here. It should have stopped at the 'not a virus' part. Kaspersky's definition of riskware is "legal software that can marginally harm the computer where it is installed or other computers in the LAN". They include all programs that can be used for FTP downloads, internet relay chat (IRC) or remote administration. Most of the programs it flags will be perfectly legitimate and necessary applications.

For example, I use a remote control program called Remote Administrator and every time I used it to view a customer's system I got an alert from Kaspersky's software. Oddly, it was complaining about the client part, which only allows you to view another PC. We'd understand if it warned about the server portion, which potentially allows other PCs to view your system.

Kaspersky says that such programs, while normally used for legitimate purposes, can sometimes be secretly installed and used by spyware or viruses. If you installed the programs, or they came on a CD such as *Shopper's* so you can choose to install them if you wish, there is no harm and the unnecessary alerts serve only to confuse. If you recognise the program as one you expected, you can tell Kaspersky Anti-Virus to ignore this program, and it will not alert you again.

## Your experts

### HELPFILE

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**Paul Mullen**

With 27 years of PC experience as a power user, programmer and IT consultant, Paul Mullen answers all PC problems, tackling hardware, system and security issues.



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**Kay Ewbank**

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**Ben Pitt**

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### BUYING HELP

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### BUSINESS HELP 180

**Simon Edwards**

Web developer and security expert Simon Edwards provides IT solutions to your business goals.



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Please contact the relevant department at the email address listed above. You can also write to us at:

Help  
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London  
W1T 4JD

Please try to give full details of your problem. We need an email address or daytime and evening telephone numbers in case we need more information.

Although the policy of *Computer Shopper* is not to publish readers' email addresses, we include them in Help so that other readers with experience of similar problems can share their solution (please also cc any comments to the relevant Help department above). If you would prefer not to have your email address published, please say so. ➔

# Adding Web 'n' walk to a desktop computer

**Q** For various reasons, I am unable to access the internet at home. I would like to know if there is a way of making the T-Mobile Web 'n' walk data card for notebooks work with my desktop computer? At first glance, it looks as if the card uses a PCMCIA slot to connect, although a desktop PC hasn't got any of those slots.

By the way, your review in *What's New: Networks, Shopper* February 2007 said the maximum data transfer is 2GB per month, but according to the latest T-Mobile brochure the maximum data transfer per month is 3GB.

Jordi Barnes, box750@inbox.com

**A** The Web 'n' walk card, as stated in *What's New: Networks, Shopper* February 2007, is a PC Card. Specifically it is a CardBus card, which is the 32-bit version of PCMCIA. We can't guarantee that there won't be any compatibility issues (particularly with installing drivers for this card), but there are

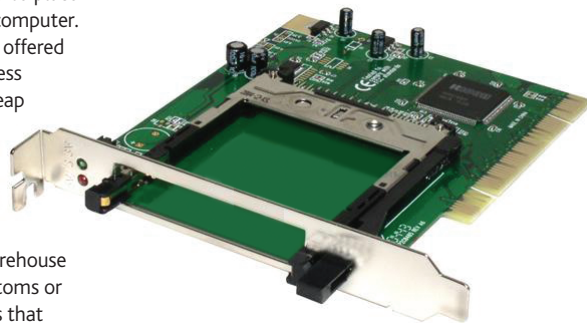


▲ T-Mobile's data card might not work for you, so check coverage in your area

CardBus-to-PCI adaptors that allow you to place PC Card/CardBus cards into a desktop computer.

A good example is the adaptor card offered by Data-alliance.net, a supplier of wireless networking equipment. This is fairly cheap to buy, at around £21 including VAT and shipping, and can be ordered through the company's eBay store at <http://stores.ebay.co.uk/DataAlliance>. Although based in Arizona, Data Alliance has a London warehouse so there won't be any hassles with Customs or shipping delays. There are also adaptors that offer a front-panel socket for PC cards. These usually use several wide ribbon cables, and many of the designs function only with 16-bit PCMCIA cards. For most wireless cards, you need an adaptor that supports CardBus cards.

Since we reviewed the card, T-Mobile has increased its monthly fair-use allowance from two to three gigabytes per month, as well as allowing the use of instant messaging applications. However, the company has been incurring the wrath of the Advertising Standards Authority by advertising the service as "unlimited\*". This is not what we understand by unlimited. That asterisk apparently means it is subject to a Fair-Use policy that limits both the quantity of data you can transfer and the kinds of applications you can use. If you were lucky enough to find the maximum theoretical network speed of 1.8Mbps/s and downloaded like crazy, you



▲ PCI adaptors allow you to add PC Cards and CardBus cards to a desktop PC

could use up that 3GB allowance in just under four hours. Still, 3GB should be enough for most users. If you pay extra, you can use services such as a Voice-over IP (VoIP) phone and get a 10GB allowance.

If you can't get ADSL broadband, the data card might not work for you either. While T-Mobile's high-speed services claim to cover 65 per cent of the population, that's a lot less than 65 per cent of the country because the company serves the highest-populated areas first. BT claims that ADSL or SDSL broadband is available to 95 per cent of households and businesses. So if you can't get BT broadband, there is a very good chance T-Mobile's 3G UMTS network won't be available in your area, either. In that case, you'll get a far slower speed over the GPRS network. Check local coverage before signing up.

## Feedback Missing System Tray icons

**✉** I wrote to you a while ago about a couple of problems I was having, one of which was a long-standing issue concerning icons that had gone missing from the Quick Launch taskbar on my desktop PC. Unfortunately, while your solutions sorted out my other problem, they didn't fix this one. However, after several months of further effort – and several years since the problem first started – I have finally cracked it.

First, I noticed by chance that some of the icons reappeared briefly when I renewed my PC-cillin anti-virus subscription in July and installed the upgraded software supplied. Once the install was completed, the icons vanished again, with occasional random reappearances of the odd one or two as I had been experiencing before. There followed a six-month exchange of configuration details, logs and further software upgrades with the extremely helpful Trend Micro technical support team before one of the agents advised removal of both Spybot Search & Destroy 1.3 and the Logitech Desktop Manager.

Removing Spybot restored all the icons apart from the Volume Control, which remained missing. Trend Micro noted that Spybot is "absolutely not" compatible with PC-cillin. Given its popularity, it's a shame

Trend Micro doesn't mention this or check for it on installation.

Second, Volume Control was also sorted through a suggestion from the Trend Micro team, but was not associated with any PC-cillin conflicts. The technician mentioned that he had had a similar problem with Windows XP Service Pack 2 (SP2) that had been caused by UPnP and solved by using Hide Icons for Universal Plug and Play Devices.

To solve the issue, open My Network Places and, in the left-hand Tasks panel, select 'Hide icons for networked UPnP devices'. If you're using Windows Classic folders, you must change Folder Options to 'Show common tasks in folders' to see this. I was impressed by the persistence shown by Trend Micro's support in getting to the bottom of the problem. Its service was first class.

Steve Curr, pendula@aol.com

**A** Thank you very much for that report. The original source of this fix seems to be [www.michna.com/kb/WxSystray.htm](http://www.michna.com/kb/WxSystray.htm). There are lots of different suggestions, which have been researched to find which work most consistently.

The most common cause of missing taskbar icons appears to be that the program trying to install the icons requests them before the Windows desktop is ready to accept them.

On startup, Windows gives the command to start loading many different programs almost simultaneously, so the load order can vary according to which ones load faster. As such, very small and unrelated changes can change the loading times just enough to cause missing icons to reappear sometimes.

The one consistent cause, at least on Windows XP systems with SP2, is the UPnP Notification area monitor icon. When you choose the option to 'Show icons for UPnP devices in network places' it causes a module called upnpui.dll (the UPnP Tray Monitor and Folder) to be added to the startup list. Oddly, the task it inserts into the Registry to do this is called ObjectDelayLoad. Somehow it appears to delay the desktop loading, so the desktop is not ready to accept requests to load icons into the Notification area. We think this is because the network calls needed to discover UPnP devices take a long time.

To fix this problem, first make sure you have chosen to display the category view in Control Panel, as opposed to the classic view. If Control Panel says Pick a Category, you are using the correct view. If not, go to Tools, Folder Options and choose 'Show common tasks in folders'. After that, select the 'Hide UPnP icons' task in My Network. This will remove the UPnP monitor the next time you reboot.



# Slow copying files across a small LAN

**Q** We have a small LAN with three PCs, and have recently added a separate NAS device, an Infrant ReadyNAS NV with two 250GB drives in a mirrored RAID configuration. We are gradually moving all the files currently spread across the hard disks of the individual computers on to the NAS. However, moving files to the NAS is tortuously slow, although I don't have any point of reference so the transfer rate might be normal for 100MB Ethernet. For the duration, the source PC remains unusable and the Explorer.exe process uses 90 per cent of the processor time, and it's impossible to do anything other than manipulate applications that are already running. I can still browse with Firefox, for example.

While inconvenient, this isn't my main concern. Once the progress indicator reaches 100 per cent and disappears from view, the Explorer.exe process remains at 90 per cent processor time and the computer is as unresponsive to input. Depending on the size and number of files moved to the NAS, it remains in this state for three or four hours. If I monitor things in the Task Manager, Explorer doesn't seem to be accessing the hard disk at this point. The I/O Read and I/O Write column values don't change, although the Services.exe process I/O Read column value increments rapidly. I've no idea what Explorer is doing, and I must confess I've lost patience with it a few times and killed the process. The move operation has completed, so surely my data is already sitting on the NAS? I'm not clear about the implications of doing that. Am I risking my data by cutting off Explorer.exe, even after the move says it has completed?

The PC storing most of the files, and on which the slow file move issue is most frequently experienced, is a Windows 2000 Server computer. Two switches sit between the Windows 2000 Server computer and the NAS, and each supports 10/100Mbit/s. They are connected with Cat5 cabling.

*Mikael Horseman, mikael@sbwclan.co.uk*

**A** If there is no other file traffic on the network, you should be able to transfer files at pretty close to the 100Mbit/s speed over the network. This works out at about 700MB a minute. If it is only a fraction of this speed, you may want to test for network problems. A simple test of the

network's speed would be to ping the NAS device using a large packet size; for example, type: PING NAS /l 8000 /t.

You will need to replace the word NAS with the IP address of your NAS device. Press Ctrl-C to end the test and get statistics. Pinging with a packet size of 8,000 bytes over a 100Mbit/s Ethernet network should take about three minutes. If you use too big a size for your network, you will get timed-out responses. You may also get time-outs if your NAS device has been set not to respond to pings. One bad network card can make the whole network run slowly. Disconnecting devices from the switch can help identify where the problem lies.

One common network error that occurs when you have multiple hubs or switches on a network is the creation of a loop. I came across this when investigating the very slow speed of a small office network that had a broadband router and two other switches. Each of the switches was connected to the router, but someone had thought it would improve the network if they also connected the other two switches together. That confused the switches. A switch is an intelligent hub that learns which path to route data for a particular device. By creating a loop, each packet was being sent round and round the network until the maximum number of hops was exceeded. Furthermore, the packets travelling all round the loop were colliding with each other so the whole network worked incredibly slowly.

Some networked storage devices seem far slower than others, but your biggest problem is the way Windows Explorer works. When Explorer displays a program, it uses the icon stored in the program's .exe file. To display each program with the correct icon, Explorer needs to read part of each executable file. But whenever you switch to a new folder, it seems to access all files, even those that are data files and should be displayed using the icon associated with that file type. It also decides to read and cache the information for files in all first-level subfolders, just in case you open that folder. This is supposed to happen in the background, but often causes noticeable delays.

The problem will be exacerbated by your anti-virus software, which is probably trying to scan every file Explorer tries to access. Try

| Seq# | Time   | Process Name | PID  | Operation    | Path                                                                             | Result  | Detail            |
|------|--------|--------------|------|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-------------------|
| 1003 | 3:15.1 | Explorer.exe | 2948 | RegOpenKey   | HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Shell Icons | SUCCESS | Desired Access: Q |
| 1004 | 3:15.1 | Explorer.exe | 2948 | RegOpenValue | HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Shell Icons | SUCCESS | Type: REG_DWORD   |
| 1005 | 3:15.1 | Explorer.exe | 2948 | RegOpenKey   | HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Shell Icons | SUCCESS | Desired Access: Q |
| 1006 | 3:15.1 | Explorer.exe | 2948 | RegOpenValue | HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Shell Icons | SUCCESS | Type: REG_DWORD   |
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| 1008 | 3:15.1 | Explorer.exe | 2948 | RegOpenValue | HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Shell Icons | SUCCESS | Type: REG_DWORD   |
| 1009 | 3:15.1 | Explorer.exe | 2948 | RegOpenKey   | HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Shell Icons | SUCCESS | Desired Access: Q |
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| 1011 | 3:15.1 | Explorer.exe | 2948 | RegOpenKey   | HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Shell Icons | SUCCESS | Desired Access: Q |
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| 1013 | 3:15.1 | Explorer.exe | 2948 | RegOpenKey   | HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Shell Icons | SUCCESS | Desired Access: Q |
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| 1019 | 3:15.1 | Explorer.exe | 2948 | RegOpenKey   | HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Shell Icons | SUCCESS | Desired Access: Q |
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| 1034 | 3:15.1 | Explorer.exe | 2948 | RegOpenValue | HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Shell Icons | SUCCESS | Type: REG_DWORD   |
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| 1113 | 3:15.1 | Explorer.exe | 2948 | RegOpenKey   | HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Shell Icons | SUCCESS | Desired Access    |

# Unable to boot into Safe Mode

**Q** I have been suffering from spyware pop-ups such as ErrorSafe and DriveCleaner, so I found your reply in *Helpfile*, *Shopper* March 2007 very useful ('Internet intrusions driving me mad'). I downloaded all the programs you recommended and updated them, but could not follow your instructions to boot up my computer in Safe Mode by pressing the F8 key repeatedly during the boot process. Unfortunately, my PC just ignores this and always continues through to Windows XP Professional Edition. I have a Logitech iTouch keyboard, which I thought might be the problem. Do you know if there is any other way to force my PC to boot up in Safe Mode?

Dave Johnson, dean762@yahoo.com

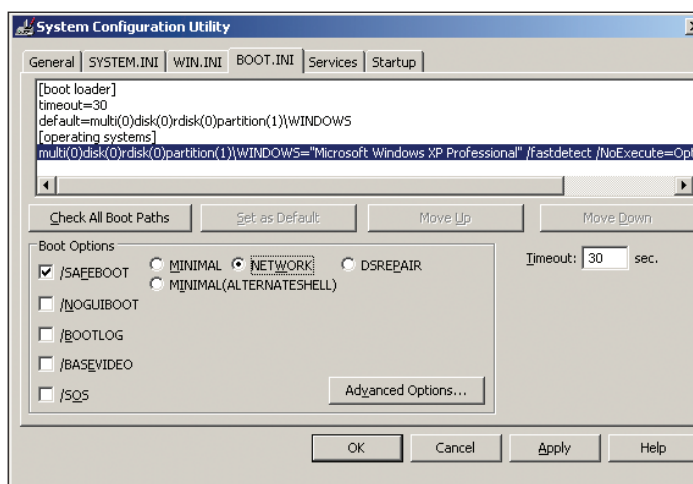
**A** We suspect your computer is not recognising the Logitech keyboard until after Windows is loaded, so it does not register the F8 key being pressed. This will also prevent it going into the BIOS setup program. We assume you have the USB version of the Logitech keyboard. To get this recognised before you load Windows, you have to enable Legacy system support for USB keyboards in the BIOS. In many BIOSes, this is confusingly named Legacy USB Device Support, which suggests the word 'Legacy' refers to the USB devices. In fact, it refers to Legacy operating systems such as DOS, which do not load USB device drivers and rely on the BIOS to provide keyboard support.

On your motherboard, the default setting for this is auto, so it should be enabled. To get into the BIOS, you will need to press a key when your PC is first turned on, which won't work until you have changed the setting in the BIOS. To fix the problem, you need to find a PS/2 style keyboard.

Apart from this problem, some computers give you an incredibly short time to press F8 before they start loading Windows in normal mode. That is why we tell readers to press F8 repeatedly in the hope of catching that short time interval. Fortunately, if pressing F8 does not seem to work, there is an alternative method to get into Safe Mode using Microsoft's System

Configuration utility, better known as Msconfig. Click Start, Run and type msconfig in the box and click OK. The System Configuration Utility will appear. Click on the boot.ini tab and, under Boot Options, select /SAFEBOOT then choose Network if you want Safe Mode with Networking. Click OK and restart your computer when you're prompted. Your computer will restart in Safe Mode.

When you are finished with troubleshooting in Safe Mode, open Msconfig once again and, on the boot.ini tab, untick /SAFEBOOT then click OK to restart your computer. This should sort out the problem.



► Safe Mode is an incredibly useful utility, but you may need to ensure your PC is configured to use it

# My Inspiron won't play a DVD

**Q** I have a Dell Inspiron 1150 PC and, until now, I have had no problems with it. Recently, however, it stopped recognising DVDs, although CDs still work fine. We tried reinstalling the software, and got in touch with Dell, who thought it was an issue with the decoder and said I would have to perform a System Restore to fix it.

There is a huge amount of work and programs on this notebook and it would take a lot of time to reinstall it all. I was wondering if it is possible to restore just the DVD decoder without losing everything else.

George Pearce, mail.pearce@googlemail.com

**A** Reinstalling the operating system is a ridiculous way to fix just the DVD decoder. The DVD decoder software is an addition to Windows, anyway. You probably need to remove all traces of the DVD decoder software before reinstalling it. This process is complicated to explain over the phone and so the Dell support worker didn't try. Telling you to reinstall everything is the easiest solution for Dell.

Dell used to provide installation CDs with all its computers, which it still does for business computers. A couple of years ago, it decided to cut costs by not sending out the CDs with every consumer system. Instead, these systems

have a recovery partition like other manufacturers have been using for years. It is also still possible to order the CDs when you order the computer, but you must pay extra. Unfortunately, the recovery partition can be used only to restore a system to the state it was in when it left the factory, wiping out installed programs, user settings, data and all the updates downloaded since. This is usually a terrible idea. Furthermore, technical support might recommend this step "just to rule out a possible software problem" even when the problem is a hardware fault which reloading the operating system won't cure.

Dell has now recognised that its failure to send out CDs with systems creates many problems, and many customers claim that if you moan loudly enough Dell will send out the missing CD to you.

We're not sure that your problem is caused by software, anyway. Sometimes, even though your drive will read CDs, a hardware fault could prevent it recognising a DVD. Still, loading new DVD software would be the best way to check that it is not caused by software problems. We suggest you start with Windows' own DVD troubleshooter. To launch it, click Start and click Help and Support. Under Pick a Help Topic, click Fixing a problem. Then click Games, Sound and Video problems and, in the right-hand pane, click DVD Troubleshooter. Some further suggestions

are given in Microsoft's Knowledge Base article at <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/321641>.

During your tests, ensure you are trying to play a pressed (manufactured) DVD. Home-recorded DVDs may not play on all drives. Try playing different DVDs to make sure you don't just have a bad disc. If you don't have the CD that came with your computer, finding the DVD decoder can be tricky. Often DVD decoder software supplied with a drive or a system has strict licensing conditions stipulating that it can be distributed only with the DVD player for which it was licensed. This often means the DVD decoder software is not available for download.

In other cases, the downloads are just an update or patch that won't work without the original software. Fortunately, in your case we believe the computer came with Sonic Solutions software, and a complete version is available from <http://support.dell.com>. As an alternative, or if you find you can't download a DVD decoder for free, try the free 30-day trial version of CyberLink's PowerDVD software from [www.cyberlink.com/multi/download/download.html](http://www.cyberlink.com/multi/download/download.html). Many people find PowerDVD superior to the Dell-supplied software or to Windows Media Player. Even if you decide to uninstall it after the end of the 30-day trial, it leaves the MPEG2 codec on your PC, and with this installed you can use Windows Media Player to play DVDs.

# Upgrade to Windows XP went wrong

**Q** I decided to upgrade from Windows Me to Windows XP Home Edition. The installation began OK, but with 11 minutes to go the screen froze. I contacted Microsoft, which tried to be helpful and went through various procedures with me but was unable to fix the problem. Microsoft said it was a possible hardware conflict. This left me with a computer that did not work, and Microsoft suggested I contact a computer engineer and recommended that he perform a parallel procedure to get my computer running again. Provisional enquiries revealed that the engineer did not know what was meant by a parallel procedure and indicated that I would need to spend a considerable sum.

It was suggested that it might be more cost-effective for me to buy a new computer so an engineer could transfer the data from my old PC to the new one. Accordingly, I bought a new computer, which was delivered this week. While I have backups or hard

copies of important documents from my old computer, there are still some files that I would like to get back. I would prefer not to spend the £100 or so that is apparently involved. Now I have my new computer, I wonder if there is a straightforward way to rescue my files and transfer them to my new computer bearing in mind I am a PC novice?

*Ivan Slator, slator@dsl.pipex.com*

**A** You have received some bad advice. When you try to upgrade an old copy of Windows to Windows XP, it attempts to retain all the software applications and settings installed under the old version of Windows. Sometimes the accumulated junk in the Registry can cause problems. You may also have too little disk space or perhaps bad sectors on a previously unused portion of the hard disk, a problem that has become obvious only during the installation of Windows XP.

When this happens, the best option is often to do a parallel installation of Windows XP. This

means you install Windows XP into a different folder (or even a different drive partition), so you get a clean installation of Windows XP. You can then use that working copy of Windows XP to move data from the old Windows files. In most cases, it should be possible to uninstall Windows XP from the old computer and return to a working version of Windows Me. This will allow you to run the Files and Settings Transfer Wizard, which you will find on the Windows XP CD. Running this will copy all your data files and settings into a large file. If your old PC has a CD burner, you may be able to burn this file to a CD. Otherwise, it might fit on a flash drive.

Finally, if both computers are desktop computers, it should be possible to temporarily disconnect the CD drive in your new computer and use its cable to hook up the hard disk from your old computer. You can then run the Files and Settings Transfer Wizard on the new computer to re-import your files and settings. This method will also allow you to copy files across manually.

# Motherboard won't boot with battery

**Q** I replaced the MSI motherboard on my second computer as it was becoming unreliable with memory errors and had bulging capacitors around the memory slots. The replacement board from eBay, a new but old-stock Gigabyte GA-6VXC7-4X-P board, refuses to boot unless I remove the three-volt battery first.

If I then try to change the BIOS settings and save them, it reports a CMOS checksum error, but will boot if I accept the load defaults option. When running, it's stable. Is it salvageable, or should I ask for a refund?

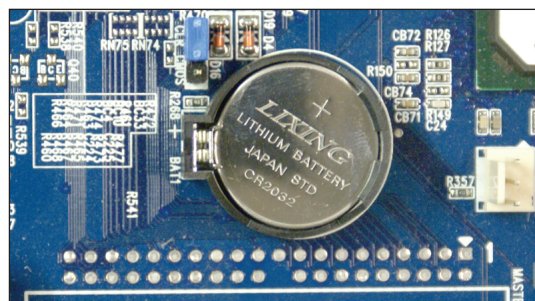
*Mike Harrison, mjeh@globalnet.co.uk*

**A** Check the position of the CMOS Reset jumper, which is usually found near the battery. Many boards are

shipped from the factory with this in the reset position and will not boot until it has been moved to the normal position. It is also possible that the battery has run down and is not supplying the correct voltage. Try using the battery from your old motherboard as a temporary replacement.

It's also possible that you may have a bad CMOS chip. Perhaps that was why this board was sitting in someone's warehouse for so long. If, after loading the default values, you get a CMOS error warning when you restart the computer, it is likely the cause is bad CMOS memory, which usually means replacing the motherboard. However, if you can

restart without a CMOS error, and the problem comes back only when you turn off the computer, replacing the battery is likely to be sufficient.



▲ Many motherboards are shipped from the factory with the CMOS reset jumper in the reset position

## Feedback Email full of undelivered, unknown messages

**✉** I read last month's 'Email full of undelivered, unknown messages' letter, and I have a suggestion. My parents had been suffering a similar problem with their Freeserve account. To get round it, I added two rules at the end of the Outlook Express filter list:

- 1 If To or Cc does not contain @ABCDE.fsnet.co.uk then stop processing any more rules
- 2 If To or Cc does not contain ValidName@ABCDE.fsnet.co.uk then delete message from server

In this example, ABCDE replaces my parents' subdomain. Similarly, ValidName replaces my parents' correct account name. The first rule is necessary to allow through bulk

emails that do not contain the actual recipient's address in either To or Cc fields. Fortunately, most spam these days places all recipient addresses in the headers. For the second rule, I originally had the action as Mark as Read and Move to a Spam folder so I could check the operation of these rules. Because of the first rule, and the fact that my parents also have an NTLWorld email address, it is important that these are the last two rules in Outlook Express.

With their Freeserve email address I also set up their spam filter to mark all suspect emails as spam, then I put a filter in Outlook Express to look for \*\*\*SPAM\*\*\* in the subject line and move it into a Spam folder on the PC, so they could quickly scan these emails and delete them with no trouble.

*Nick Howitt, nick.howitt@ntlworld.com*

**A** This combination of rules was one we had not thought of and should work for people who use only one valid email address (unless spammers go back to using Bcc addresses). You would have to be careful in applying it, and we suggest setting the action to move email to a spam folder at first. Outlook Express does not have flexible mail-filtering rules and does not allow you to filter on other headers. We prefer Mozilla Thunderbird, which does allow you to do this. Freeserve/Wanadoo will always have a header called Envelope-to:, which shows to whom the email was sent. You can use this to filter messages. Incidentally, the Freeserve/Wanadoo/Orange spam-filtering software does not appear to be very accurate, and several readers have complained that it classifies email from *Helpfile* as spam. ☹